

REMARKS

Reconsideration of all grounds of rejection and allowance of the claims are respectfully requested in light of the above amendments and the following remarks. Claims 1-2 remain pending herein, with method claims 3-4 being withdrawn from consideration.

(1) Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over Hata et al. (U.S. 5,778,525 hereafter "Hata"). Applicants respectfully traverse this ground of rejection.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the well-explained annotations on Fig. 3 of Hata. Referring to the aforementioned figure of Hata, Applicants respectfully note that the slides are the items that permit the heads to be movably attached, namely reference numerals 43 (there are two slides shown), which Hata refers to as a "ball thread 43 that is rotatably supported across a pair of support plates 42 fixed to both ends of each operating frame 30, a step motor 47 for rotatably driving the ball thread" (column 6, lines 51-54). As the stepper motor rotates the ball thread, the head 33 moves either left or right. In order for the head 33 to move in the Y-direction, the mechanism section 52 contains another pair of ball threads 54 that are driven by stepper motor 56 to drive the threads, and a moving member 57 that is fixed to an end portion of each operating frame 30 in accordance with the rotation of the ball thread (Hata, col. 7, lines 1-7). In other words, when the stepper motor 56 rotates the ball thread 54, the moving member 57 meshes with the operating frames 30 to cause movement in the Y-direction. The respective heads 33, remain slidably attached to respective slides 43.

X (Applicants respectfully submit that although Fig. 3 of Hata shows only one head slidably attached on a respective slide 43, assuming arguendo, if there were multiple heads per slide, these heads would not be drivable independently in the Y-direction. All the heads on either the top slide 43 or the bottom slide 43, would have to move together in the Y-direction as the operating frame is being moved in that direction, including the ball thread 43 to which they are attached.

In contrast, in the presently claimed invention the heads *on a particular slide* are independently drivable in the Y-direction. For example, Applicants note the difference in distance between H11 and H12 on slide 8, as compared with H21 and H22 on slide 9. On slide 8, H11 can move independently of H12 in the Y direction (specification, page 2, lines 15-18).

Applicants also respectfully submit that the specification discloses independent movement on the same Y-slide at page 4, lines 26 to page 5, line 5 describes a process by which some placement heads are moving to a desired position over the parts feeders, whereas other heads on the same slide are moving in the Y-direction above the printed circuit board. This independent Y-movement for heads arranged on a particular Y-slide is not disclosed or suggested by Hata, nor would have a person of ordinary skill in the art been motivated to provide the structure recited by the presently claimed invention. the presently claimed invention an improvement that is patentably distinguishable over the structure in Hata.

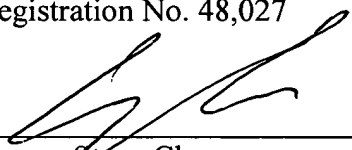
Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1 and 2 are not anticipated by Hata, as this reference fails to disclose all the recitations in Applicants' claims. Nor would have a person of ordinary skill in the art found the instant claims to be

obvious at the time of invention in view of Hata. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this ground of rejection are respectfully requested.

For all the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that all the present claims are patentable in view of the cited references. A Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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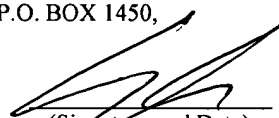
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